

GOP Chairman Expects Centralized Drive To Unseat Democrats



GEORGE BUSH
GOP Chairman

By CATHY ALLEN
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Alaska's definitely one big vocal point in the national Republican picture to the extent that its national committee chairman expects a centralized drive to unseat two of the three top statewide office incumbents.

George Bush, busy on a whirlwind itinerary that included a jaunt to Alaska and the state party convention today in Sitka, spoke to newsmen yesterday in a press conference in the Portage Room of the Anchorage-Westward Hotel. The tall, trim and tired-looking Bush called on all GOP candidates to comply with the national law that mandates campaign disclosures, "and to do it with a spirit of

cooperation," he said.

Bush took jabs at both Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, and Gov. William A. Egan, two Democratic incumbents, calling them "very, very vulnerable." He said that admittedly-partisan, but general polls and political talk in the state has convinced him that both men can be beaten.

The tall Texan also skirted any favoritism of actual candidates before the delegates get the nod officially from the state party after the primaries. He would not strongly support any Republican—even newly announced gubernatorial candidate Walter Hickel stating that the local and state party leaders had to make up their minds first before the national committee came on strong for

any one person. Following party regulations, however, Bush did comment on incumbent Don Young, R-Alaska, also up for re-election this year.

Bush said the Fort Yukon resident was considered a "safe" candidate in that he would be strong enough to stand on his own background and record without a needed heavy back-up line of attack from the national party leaders.

Bush explained that President Nixon or Vice President Gerald Ford might consider a trip to Alaska this summer or early fall to help bolster the party's candidates. He did state that Watergate and its tremendous impact that has caused the president to ebb in popularity might prompt and rightfully so, he

said, many candidates not to have the top executive U.S. officer on their campaign trail.

Bush answered the usual Watergate questions saying that although the entire scandal had been a terrible blow to the American political system, the Republicans—especially the millions of GOP regulars who had nothing to do with the political mess would rally behind their party to support it both monetarily and at the polls next November.

"What people like to forget," the drawling Texan said, "is that Congress is enjoying only a 21 per cent popularity at the polls now." He said the focus of the election-year politics would center on a lagging Congress and not on a rebounding president.

Party money, a subject close

to the heart of all Republican contenders is in a good state of affairs at this point, Bush said. Federal records showed some \$5.3 million in the GOP treasury at the beginning of the year. About 80 per cent of that money was collected by donations ranging from \$1 to \$200, he said. Although he admitted campaign contributions are filtering in much slower this year and not in as great a tally of dollars, "the Republican party is doing far better," he said, than the opposition party.

Bush said the national strategy would be to take the campaign to the "doorstep of the Democrats."

"I just have that feeling that the major issues will be pocketbook issues, war and peace, outstanding progress in

foreign affairs and domestic policies," he said.

Impeachment proceedings, if they progress, should go forth as expeditiously as possible, Bush said, having traveled with President Nixon on a speech-making tour this past week.

He said he personally talked with New York Conservative Sen. Jim Buckley prior to the senator's call for Nixon to resign earlier this week. "Sure, I was troubled, I'm trying to do something about Watergate; I'd like to see this party well-unified," he confessed, stating he was sorry to see Buckley call for resignation.

The Republican party, now on a one election winning streak after it picked up a Congressional seat special

election in California is on its long, and winding road back up, Bush indicated.

Besides the disillusionment of the young voters, and the beefing up of the Rule 29 Committee which seeks to get more women and minorities involved in party politics but not by means of the Democratic party's quota system, Bush said the party will concentrate on securing the Congressional seats it already holds.

Bush dined with a former business acquaintance from his Texan oil business days. Local investor John Overbey, who helped wage the information campaign about the hazards of building the proposed north-south runway, and Bush are old friends and spent the evening together.